

# Politics, Police and The System, Now and Forever, One and Inseparable



WILLIAM LIBBY



LOUIS SHAPIRO



SAM PAUL

J.A. REICH,  
ALIAS JACK SULLIVAN

**ROSENTHAL** is dead. Even this much is conceded by the police, who are willing to go further and admit he has been murdered, though one of the counsel for the prisoners charged with the crime would not concede the fact in open court last Monday.

And not to establish the guilt of the assassins of Herman Rosenthal, gambler and "squealer," but to relate the incidents that led up to the murder and to tell the inside story of the System, whose first commandment, "Thou shalt not squeal," he had broken, is the main purpose of this article.

The System, whose well staged bit of terrorism sealed Rosenthal's lips forever and sent into hiding the other gamblers who had fallen afoul of the System and whom he intended to have corroborate his story before the District Attorney the day he was murdered, is the collusion existing between the police and the criminal element of New York.

This collusion does not end and begin with the gamblers, but extends to keepers of houses of ill fame and includes criminals of all sorts with a political tinge, though desirable—from the common variety of pickpocket to the murderous thug.

The System exists because there is an open market for the sale of "privileges" by the police. These "privileges" enable the purchaser to break the laws the police are hired to enforce.

Now and then the purchasers of the "privileges" are arrested, but invariably when the case comes up for trial the police develop poor memories, and the courts are forced to throw out the case. The proof positive of this last statement is furnished by Police Commissioner Waldo

out on the police. His place was raided and \$2,000 found in his pocket was confiscated by one of the detectives. This occurred less than a year ago, and the detectives who made the raid are still doing business at the old stand.

At the Lexow investigation it was testified that graft intended for the police was, like Gaul, divided into three parts. The first part went to the inspector in charge of the district; the second went to the captain of the precinct, and the third went to the man higher up at Police Headquarters, who was handling the money down there.

Rosenthal, before he died, said the same held true today. Rosenthal told District Attorney Whitman so, and offered to prove it. Six hours before he was to have placed the proof he spoke of in the hands of the county prosecutor he was murdered.

Immediately the question arises, when one thinks of Rosenthal's assassination, if it is possible in New York City to hire men to commit murder. General Theodore A. Bingham, when he was Police Commissioner, said it was. And the statement he made was uttered in the presence of the police lieutenants of New York City, at the annual dinner of the Police Lieutenants' Association, of which Lieutenant Becker is a member, on February 25, 1908. The dinner was held at the Waldorf-Astoria, and many prominent politicians were present. The exact words of General Bingham on that occasion were:

"There are two places within half a mile of where we are now where any crime from the lowest to the greatest can be bought for money, and I know it, and many of you men know it, and know



DISTRICT ATTORNEY WHITMAN

HERMAN ROSENTHAL  
PHOTO BY AMERICAN PRESS ASSOC.

BRIDGE WEBER



BIG JACK ZELIG

LT CHAS. BECKER

BILLIARD BALL JACK ROSE

himself in a report made last week in an effort to prove his contention that "the courts do not work with the police."

The remarkable fact about this report is that out of 898 arrests for gambling in the twelve months ended July 17, 1912, 587 were discharged, and that 181 cases are still awaiting trial. Deducting the 181 cases still awaiting trial, the fact is that out of 717 arrests there were only 120 convictions.

The courts, particularly the magistrates' courts, where all gambling cases are first taken, have called attention time and again to the flimsy character of the evidence offered by the police, which forced them to discharge the prisoners.

On March 18 last, in the Jefferson Market court, Magistrate Kernochan discharged William Rice, a gambler, after evidence of this sort. At the time Magistrate Kernochan observed that he was just such evidence that enabled gamblers to leave the courts free men and brought attacks from the officials at Police Headquarters for the supposed inefficient aid rendered the police by the courts.

There are several gamblers who act as collectors of graft for the System. They collect only from the gamblers. Men of unspeakable description collect from houses of ill-fame and from women of the streets. Trusted saloonkeepers and, in some instances, policemen, collect from saloonkeepers who pay to keep open after hours.

And so it goes. There is scarcely a single violator of the law of the above class, with the exception of a few women, who do not pay tribute to the System. Failure to pay means arrest and loss of the license to traffic in illicit business. And in the case of those who are able to pay and do not the money is often taken from them by force.

One Harlem gambler who was collecting for the System was suspected of holding

the places, no doubt, and I can't touch them under present conditions, and I say that to all New York and will prove it if they will give me the opportunity. That's one reason why I want some secret service money."

But General Bingham did not get the money for his secret service. If he had, it would have meant that evidence would have been obtained showing up the workings of the System. Of course, that is a thing the politicians would never tolerate. Perhaps there is some significance in Bingham's removal, in the light of his statement and the recent assassination of Rosenthal, in the full glare of the Broadway lights, while seven policemen were within half a minute's walk of the murderers, who were permitted to escape without a single shot being fired at them!

It was this failure on the part of the police to draw a revolver on Rosenthal's murderers that brought upon the police the tongue lashing of District Attorney Whitman, and which led to his engaging the Burns detectives to ferret out the case.

There was another striking circumstance in which many see the fine Italian hand of the System that night at the Metropole. That is, that just prior to the murder all the taxicabs in West 45th street, between Broadway and Sixth avenue, where the murder was done, were engaged by strangers, and thus taken away from the scene of the murder, so that there would be nothing to prevent a successful escape.

Members of the System have a code of their own. To violate this code has always meant punishment that ran from smashing the offender's illicit business to summary capital punishment.

The first had been tried on Rosenthal. He fought. Then he began to tell things. He was warned to leave town and close

his mouth. His answer was defiance and a threat to expose the whole rotten workings of the System. For this he was slain.

Murder as punishment for a "squealer" has been the outgrowth of the last ten years. Formerly a man who squealed was beaten up or mutilated and forced out of town. But the slaying of McLaughlin ten years ago—and it was openly charged at the time that McLaughlin was

slain by a policeman in uniform in the West 45th street police station—the precedent was established. What had McLaughlin done? Squealed on the System.

There was much talk of the System at that time as there is now, but the System seemed to thrive on attacks.

When "Big Dick" Roche was murdered a few years ago by McDonald, the Harlem gambler, the sensational mutilation of Roche by McDonald a little over a

dozen years back was recalled. Roche, like McDonald, was a gambler. He quarrelled with McDonald and informed on him—that is, "squealed"—and the police raided McDonald's place in 125th street.

McDonald learned that Roche had furnished the evidence on which the police raided his gambling house. McDonald armed himself with a keen cutting knife. Then he sought Roche, and walking up

behind him, slashed off Roche's right ear, close to the scalp, saying:

"This is what we do to the pigs in Ireland. Now squeal!"

McDonald then went into hiding for a few days, but when he returned to his gambling house he brought with him the dried ear of Roche, and hung it over his roulette wheel. McDonald himself met a violent death later on, being instantly killed by an Albany man in a hotel in that city during a quarrel, the Albanian emptying the contents of a double-barrelled shotgun into McDonald's body.

All this was crude work as compared with the modern way of doing it. Now, it can be said with truth, the System has reduced murder to a fine art.

Perhaps the first evidence of this was the assassination of John C. Lewis, better known as "Spanish Louis," gangster and protégé of Herman Rosenthal. In this instance, an automobile was used, and this, by the way, was the first known use of the automobile for murder in any city.

"Spanish Louis" was shot to death on the night of April 1, 1910. He was walking in front of No. 333 East 11th street, when four men in an automobile drove past him, firing at him as they went. The gangster and gambler drew his revolver, but before he could bring it to a level, two bullets were fired into his brain, and he fell dead on the sidewalk. Needless to say, none of the assassins were ever arrested, though their names were handed about the gambling houses and poolrooms of the East Side.

The slain man had been taken up by Herman Rosenthal when he was running a gambling house in 7th street, near Second avenue, before he became president of the Herper Club. Rosenthal saw

is one of the gamblers who spoke to Rosenthal five minutes before he was murdered, was so incensed at the invasion of his place that he went to Police Headquarters and identified two pictures in the "Rogues' Gallery" as the robbers. After their arrest he was not quite sure they were the men, so they were discharged.

Certain persons in the neighborhood thought that "Bridge" had violated the code of the System, and a murderous assault was planned, with the result that one night, as he neared his home, at No. 132 Second avenue, he was attacked by several men with blackjacks. He was left unconscious on the sidewalk. His jaw had been broken in two places, and the disfigurement will go with him to the grave.

When the police appeared "Bridge" refused to squeal. He said he did not know the men who assaulted him.

Then "Bridge" Weber saw a light. He decided the East Side was acting too hot for him, and shortly after the murder of "Spanish Louis" he moved his gambling house to the very centre of the uptown gambling district, 42d street and Broadway. This was the beginning of the invasion of the Broadway gambling district by the East Side gamblers. "Bridge" and his place prospered, thanks to the well-oiled machinery of the "system," and his former East Side competitors argued: "If 'Bridge' can do it, why can't we?"

One after another went uptown to enter what they had always regarded as a sort of forbidden ground. Men like "Hon-est John" Kelly and Billy Ludwig resented what they regarded as the intrusion of the East Siders, and were par-

ticularly resentful when they learned that Herman Rosenthal had opened up shop at No. 131 West 15th street, opposite the Friars Club.

None of the gamblers had any use for Rosenthal. Time and again he had "squealed" against some one or other in the Police Department. They did not object to his "squealing," so much as they did to the fact that his "squeals" always drew the attention of the public to the fact that gambling was going on in the town.

Rosenthal, it is true, had been "squealing" for years. It began during the gambling crusade waged by William Travers Jerome when he was District Attorney. At that time Rosenthal was arrested for bribing a process server, whereupon he cried that he was being "framed up."

The East Side gamblers were sore on him. Many regarded him as being responsible for the disruption of the Herper Club, of which he had been twice president and which at the time of its organization was without parallel as a club. Organized thirteen years ago by "Little Tim" Sullivan, "Pat" Keenan, City Chamberlain, Colonel "Mike" Padden and the aristocracy of the turf gamblers, with a sprinkling of poolroom keepers, politicians, judges, police court magistrates and young assistant district attorneys, the club became a little world of power. Every police official of note was on its rolls as a member. Within a year after its organization every important member of the Metropolitan Turf Association, as the organization of the bookmakers was known, had become a Hesperite, and with its membership increased to five hundred, it moved from Second avenue and 4th street further up the avenue, to No. 111.

The star of "Spanish Louis" began to set a year before the automobile assassin killed him, and the protégé of Herman Rosenthal knew it. Some say it was about this time that two members of "Spanish Louis" gang, with drawn revolvers, entered the gambling house of "Bridge" Weber, at 14th street and Third avenue, and took away the \$400 cash in the bank.

"Bridge" who, it will be remembered,